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# Social and educational dimensions of the school evaluation

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### Abstract

In contrast to other aspects of education, evaluation is significantly socially laden given that it reveals school products. Because of that, evaluation unveils to society “an image in itself” of education. Evaluation is, however; more important, since it refers to the identity of those educated. Therefore, when examining evaluation, we should think of the relationship educational-social as a relationship between the identity of a student and the social process of her correct formation.

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### 1. Introduction

The modern demarche for school evaluation, in the world and also in Romania, is represented by the recognition of the re-conceptualization, modernization and updates of school evaluation, actions that consist the fourth pylon of any educational reform.[1]

From the traditional point of view, and also from the modern point, the essence of evaluation is considered the knowledge of the educational activities effects, in order to elaborate a new teacher education route. The need to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the teacher education process, to obtain relevant information about school results, to insure education according to world and national standards and to offer the feed-back necessary to all educational factors, justifies the importance of evaluation in education. Evaluation is one of the three essential elements of the education process, the triad teaching – learning – evaluation. Under the educational reform, school evaluation is re-thought on new and flexible bases, according to the modern education concept (formatting – productive education) and the concepts of reform of the education national systems.

The analysis on the school evaluation concept shows that it combines the social perspective, achievable in terms of system, with the psycho-pedagogical one, engaged in the education process level. Even though the concept of evaluation knows a multitude of valences, usage and updates, all of these are likely to produce on epistemological grounds common to two dimensions: educational and social.

As a educational dimension, school evaluation is addressed to the student and his need for knowledge, forming and development; it trains and targets all defining components of the Paideia act, in their connection and interaction, as: adequacy of school objectives and purpose to social values and demands, the concordance between the curricular deployments and the science and cultural paradigms, the relation between education contents and the education purpose, between stipulated content and student learning possibilities, the appreciation of educational activities in report with objectives, of the methodology in report with the educational content and the educational objectives etc., and, finally, the evaluation of evaluation itself. Also, evaluation represents an occasion for validation on the accuracy of educational sequences of the teaching process components and a mean of limitation, fixation and intervention on educational content and objectives.[2]

Modern school evaluation advances, from evaluation of knowledge (the traditional point of view), and tends to become the primary mean in perfecting the educational process, claiming a global strategy of forming/developing of the trained identity of personality.

From the point of view of the two education subjects, modern school evaluation decreases significantly and even excludes the punitive function, giving priority to its formative value.

As a subjective act, deployed on objective grounds – the axiology of education includes all of its components [3], school evaluation cannot exist as a purely objective action. The teacher tends to a correct and authentic evaluation through reporting student's school acquisitions to educational standards (equals to cultural - spiritual), but also to ones forming/developing rate. That is why designing, management and monitoring of the school evaluation sub-system includes, amongst need and own evaluation, that fills a student's own image from the judging of value perspective that the teacher is transmitting, a judging that is collective, social, the teacher stands for, mostly, the subjective materialization of the objective (social) demarche for quality and the way of forming/developing of the trained identity of personality.

Therefore the pedagogical functions of the school evaluation, to which most of the author assign triggers to some reverse external connection circuits (accomplished by teachers) and even some internal circuits (accomplished by students), necessary in evaluating of quality of the teaching activity, on the curricular correspondence coordinate between the pedagogical objectives, pedagogical contents and methodology (teaching – learning – evaluation) – of pedagogical informing (the interpretation and verification of school results from time to time, on ascertaining priority criteria), of pedagogical diagnosis (the interpretation and verification of school results from time to time, on quality priority criteria), of pedagogical prognosis (decisions with anticipatory value, of stimulation of forming and developing activities of the personality at superior performance and competence levels) [4] – should be understood not only as working values for some elements of the educational system (objectives, contents, methodologies, management etc.), but first of all as forming values of the personality identity of the trained one.

However, teaching results (school results) are essentially determined by what (educational contents) and how (educational methodologies) teachers teach students. As one of the two primary education subjective factors, the teacher is displaying his quality through professional manifest. But the values he promotes are determined socially: the educational role and the goals system, educational contents and the teaching – learning – evaluation methodologies, the way the education process is administered (educational management) etc., also the principles in which it is carried, they are socially determined, that they are delegated to teachers by human community, finding in his task to actually accomplishing them. Finally, a positive school evaluation (equals a correct, competent and efficient evaluation) changes student's behaviour, challenging him to think about his own learning/forming/developing activity. Because this is especially an intellectual – spiritual activity it produces the thinking of thinking phenomenon (Aristotel): students think of the things they have to accomplish and they are aware of their actions specifying the points in which they need help. So the self evaluation is accomplished through which students know their intellectual-spiritual and knowledge potential. In this moment, of the educational act, the teacher can intervene to guide the students into developing the capacity for self evaluation and helping them to adopt a program and a self learning system. All these actions have educational value only if they are reported to the need and the forming of the trained identity of personality process.

As a social dimension, the school evaluation represents the demarche of education for social, political and cultural-spiritual structures and communities (including the educational) manifested at a national, regional and local scale through their representative – parties and politic personalities, culture personalities, science personalities, religious and church personalities, mass media personalities, ONGs.

Between the school evaluation with social value, that target the educational quality of a subsystem engaged in accomplishing of assumed objectives in a cultural and economical view, at a politic of education level, we distinguish:

- The function of social validation of the education system product, at different levels of school and professional integration;
- The function of social, school and professional orientation, at different levels of decision, that engages all education factors responsibility (teachers, students, parents, local community representatives etc.);
- The function of social, school and professional selection, at different levels of classification and hierarchy of education activity results expressed in process and product terms.[4]

School evaluation is closely tied to the social context, economical and political context of a country, because the educational system is preparing its citizen for social-political, professional-economical and cultural-spiritual insertion, and a inefficient and incorrect evaluation can determine trained subjects to manifest attitudes and behavior that create tension in the school community, the social community, the political community etc., while a competent evaluation is efficient for its substantial contribution in forming free personalities but also social-political, professional-economic and cultural-spiritual responsible personalities.

School evaluation is not always objective, it cannot be 100 percent objective, because it is accomplished by subjects, by subjective persons, so it represents not only an important educational action, but also a constantly sensitive point of the education system.

The social-political value of school evaluation is underlined, for example, by P. Bradfoot, that over 10 years ago said “evaluation is the most powerful political instrument of education”. [5] The statement has significantly important subtext, consisting in the fact that evaluation, generally, and school evaluation, represent an encouraging action or a diminishing of the evaluated subjects identity. The evaluation is perceived even more sensitive by students, who just started the creating of personal identity process, so any evaluative action in this context has its great meanings and repercussions. Every individual has a personal identity that represents the essence of his being. This is perceived in a way by the individual himself and more or less by other people or social groups. In case the outside evaluation is, mostly, in accordance with individual presentation of his own value as a human being (equals personal identity), it is received by the individual as a positive evaluation because it encourages him in his own identity.

It is but enough if in the unessential aspects of the evaluated being, the evaluator to realize a insufficient or a wrong evaluation, the subject will appreciate this action as an action that is threatening his identity.

“For one of the Romanian language and literature course, the fifth grade students had to compose a grammar description of a dear person. Florin was the only student that said he did not do his homework. At half course, his desk mate told me (C.T.) that Florin had written his homework but, that it was not a composition, but a poem about his mother, and he was ashamed of reading it fearing that his classmates will laugh at him.

At the end of the class Florin asked me if he could recite his poem to us. He recited the poem with a lower voice, always looking at the paper, putting his foot forward and then backwards all the time and pulling his shirts collar. When he was done, his classmate from the back desk said “I didn’t hear a thing. Can you read it once more, but louder this time?”. Florin answered “No!” and sat back down.”

Interpretation. Florin proves himself as having a real literary talent for his age, but not being confident of his own strength (intimate universe – personal identity). He doesn’t like reading in front of a classroom and he is afraid of the reaction other people might have (poor socialization). The refusal for reading the poem once more is probably due to his shyness (intimate and little socialized universe – the social-intimate unity formed at a rudimentary state) and due to the fact that no one has encouraged him till now to do this (the absence of socialization influence factor). His talent must be stimulated (by educational factors – social factors), as his trust

in himself also, both dimensions of his personality/identity – intimate and social (the reciting of a poem in front of the classroom is a social act) – becoming a whole – personal identity.

Following the case study, evaluation is influenced by personal identity, educational factors and social factors. So, I have developed and evaluated through tests – that have as theme the accepted ways of evaluation, by pupils, and the influence that different types of evaluation have on their personal identity -. The tests were taken on a set of 160 pupils of different sex types, from the 5th grade to the 8th grade, and they were signed anonymous so that pupils could express themselves without obstacles, influences or inhibition as follows:

- Grade\_\_\_\_\_
- Sex\_\_\_\_\_
- Are the grades you receive important to you?
- In which way do you like to be evaluated?
- Do you consider that the teacher evaluating you correctly and in an objective way?
- Specify the way the class evaluation takes place (oral/written evaluation).
- How do you think the oral/written evaluation should be?
- In what way does the evaluation and its results influence you?

The organic connection of the two dimensions of school evaluation, educational and social, becomes obvious especially if we try ex-raying social positions on education, generally, and especially on school evaluation.

Nevertheless, social was not able to change the situation in an essential manner, between the three components of the educational process, teaching – learning – evaluating, the last one being – and is – the most neglected over the years and being given an inappropriate importance of its educative-forming value. Even though between school, family and society a educative influences unit is attested at an axiological and methodological state, school and family also take care of the intimate universe of students, in forming his cultural-spiritual identity and sometimes it denies a excessive socialization even protecting them socially, not to be influenced in a malefic manner by its negative phenomenon, generalized to the stigmas: street influence, neighborhood education, gang spirit etc.

## Conclusions

The educational and social dimensions of the school evaluation interact, action that can have positive actions but also unwanted repercussions in education for students.

The definition of school evaluation, as it is shown by the discrimination of its essence, should begin from the essence of education at a certain step of school. In the middle school it is essential to create efficient and favorable conditions for a continuous forming of the student's cultural-spiritual identity, so the school evaluation should be taken care of such an appreciation of the educational finalities (but also of the other components of the education system – teachers, managers, curriculum and curricular pieces etc.) who should represent, on one hand, significant values of the student's forming identity, and on the other hand values of the education system and process. Evaluation affects the identity of the evaluated.

The evaluation of school results functions are multiple, from the establishment of the competences forming level, diagnostic, improvement, correction, projection etc. so entailing the pupil to new ways of development and developing perspectives.

Pupils from 5th grade to 8th grade generally appreciate positively school evaluation giving it numerous significant values for forming and developing of individual personality capacities and for evaluation as a educational action. They also formulate numerous claims on school results evaluation that are more significant on a individual forming-developing level than on the quality of pedagogical approach level.

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